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READING ANNA'S INSTABILITY AND FEAR OF ABANDONMENT IN *ANNA KARENINA*

Pembacaan Instabilitas dan Rasa Takut Ditinggal Anna dalam *Anna Karenina*

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Abstract: *Literary works often represent psychological issues through the conflicts they pose. Every so often, most literary works cannot be grasped as purely a psycho-literary works, but rather they implicitly connote psychological themes through conflicts, characterizations, and even settings. In continuing this tradition, this study examines a classic literature by Leo Tolstoy entitled Anna Karenina. This literary work is often seen to be an allegory for Imperial Russian community, social unrest, betrayal, and familial problems. Expanding the rich themes of this novel, this study specifically analyzes Anna Karenina through psychological lens. Concept of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) by Susan Hoeksema is used as the main concept to interpret the findings of the analysis. This study used qualitative method through a closed-reading attempt. The data of this study are narrator's explanations and the characters' utterances related the symptoms of the personality disorder suffered by Anna only. This study found that the personality disorder suffered by Anna is borderline personality disorder. This study is intended to explain the symptom of borderline personality disorder experienced by Anna are the instability in her mood and behavior and the fear of abandonment and the instability in her interpersonal relationships.*

Keywords*: Anna Karenina, Borderline Personality Disorder, psycho-literary work*

Abstrak: *Karya sastra seringkali merepresentasikan persoalan psikologis melalui konflik yang ditimbulkannya. Seringkali, sebagian besar karya sastra tidak dapat dipahami sebagai karya psiko-sastra murni, tetapi secara implisit berkonotasi dengan tema psikologis melalui konflik, penokohan, dan bahkan latar. Melanjutkan tradisi tersebut, kajian ini mengkaji sebuah karya sastra klasik karya Leo Tolstoy berjudul Anna Karenina. Karya sastra ini sering dianggap sebagai alegori bagi komunitas Kekaisaran Rusia, kerusuhan sosial, pengkhianatan, dan masalah keluarga. Memperluas tema yang kaya dari novel ini, penelitian ini secara khusus menganalisis Anna Karenina melalui lensa psikologis. Konsep Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) oleh Susan Hoeksema digunakan sebagai konsep utama untuk menginterpretasikan temuan analisis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui upaya membaca tertutup. Data dari penelitian ini adalah penjelasan narator dan tuturan para tokoh terkait dengan gejala gangguan kepribadian yang dialami oleh Anna saja. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa gangguan kepribadian yang dialami Anna adalah gangguan kepribadian borderline. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan gejala borderline personality disorder yang dialami oleh Anna yaitu ketidakstabilan mood dan perilaku serta ketakutan akan pengabaian dan ketidakstabilan dalam hubungan interpersonalnya.*

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Kata Kunci: *Anna Karenina, Borderline Personality Disorder, psiko-sastra*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, psychology touches almost of every aspects of human life. As society becomes more complex, psychology has assumed an increasingly important role in solving human problems. As its basic and fundamental principle, psychology reveals the very depth of the structure that regulates how individuals or subjects perceive some phenomenon and behave in a very specific manner in particular social context (Valsiner, 2020). Even though the very notion of psychology is often challenged by postmodernist paradigm of human interactions (for example two seminal books from Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 1987 that challenge the utilization of psychoanalysis within the discipline of psychology), it is still perceived as a pivotal area to be explored. This exploration is believed, though often individuated in its execution, to be able to grasp societal or cultural structure where individuals reside. Individual's narrativity is crucial in determining this very structure (Pléh, 2018).

However, as time progresses, it should be noted that psychology does not only reside within individual (human) psyche, but it is also be able to be traced in human's material creation as well. One of the creations that is often psychologically discussed is literature. Literary works, with all their beating formalistic internality, are always permeated by the subjectivity of their authors. All of the characters that fill the literary works' narrativities are also possessing lively psychological traits that can also be analyzed. The analysis of such characters can be connected either into the authors' subjectivity or historicity, or into the societal context that surrounds that very literary work (Gerrig, 2018). The latter understanding is the conceptual framework that is used in this study.

This study particularly utilizes the correlation of psychological concept with literary work in analyzing Leo Tolstoy *Anna Karenina* (2002, orig. 1878). This novel tells much about psychological aspects and the struggles of the characters. It is also regarded as Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece of fiction during his life. The love story of Kitty and Levin which ends happily is a sharp contrast to the love story of Anna and Vronsky which ends tragically in failure. This contradictory fate becomes a psychological focal point in the novel. Furthermore, Anna's strange attitude as well as her unusual behaviors are small examples of the psychological phenomenon that permeates within the entirety of the novel's narrative. The change of her feeling from love to hate toward her husband and her son with no certain reasons, is interesting and suitable to be discussed using psychological point of view.

Psychology of Literature, as Wellek and Warren call it (1963), can be divided into four kind of studies related to the object of the study, namely:

> … the psychological study of the writer, as type and individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or, finally, the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology) (Wellek and Warren, 1963)

The author, the creative process, the character, or the reader of the literary work itself can be analyzed through the utility of the theory of psychology of literature.

Darma, continuing Wellek and Warren's idea, also strengthens the elaboration above about psychology of literature. He states that there are three purposes of why psychology is included in the literary study. These three purposes are, (1) To know the behavior and motivation of the characters within particular literary works that can be found (or simply reflect) individuals' characteristics in the real life, (2) to know the behavior and motivation of the author, (3) to know the psychological reaction of the readers (Darma, 2020). Thus, incorporating this understanding into the novel's story, Anna Karenina's behavior can be seen as the representation of the personality disorder. The reason of Anna Karenina ends her life by committing suicide by jumping in front of a running train is included into the psychological problem.

As the main theoretical view and narrowing psychological gaze in analyzing the novel, the conception of Borderline Personality Disorder (or BPD) is used here. Borderline personality disorder is characterized by a pervasive pattern of unstable mood, interpersonal relationships, and self-image (Halgin and Whitbourne, 2015). Their attitudes and feeling toward other people may change rapidly over short period of time. In literature, if a character told in the literary work behaves as the explanation above, then he/she is diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Women commonly suffer from depression more often than men. BPD is commonly diagnosed in people in a lower socioeconomic classes than in other classes (Hoeksema, 2004). The variety of symptoms that make up the criteria for a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder reflects, to some extent, the complexity of this disorder (Hoeksema, 2017). Most people show symptoms in the late adolescence or early adult life. People who are diagnosed with BDP usually experience the following difficulties:

(1) Instability in mood and behavior.

Instability is a key feature of borderline personality disorder. The mood of people with borderline personality disorder is unstable, with bouts of severe depression, anxiety, or anger seeming to arise frequently and often without good reason (Hoeksema, 2017). People with this disorder often experience the rapid mood shifts, in which emotional states tend to last only a few hours. They also have strong emotions that are easily triggered.

(2) Fear of abandonment

They are nearly paranoid about abandonment and misinterpret other people's innocent actions as abandonment or rejection (Hoeksema, 2017). These abandonment fears are related to an intolerance of being alone and a need to have other people with them.

(3) Instability in interpersonal relationship

Relationship instability is thought to be a symptom of early insecure attachment characterized by both fearful distrust and needy dependency. Their interpersonal relationships are extremely unstable, and these people can switch from idealizing others to despising them without provocation (Hoeksema ,2017)

(4) Instability in self image

People with borderline personality disorder are often confused about their own identity, or concept of "who" they are. This identity confusion may reach a point at which they become unclear about the boundaries between themselves and others (Halgin and Whitbourne, 2015). In close relationship, they

may feel difficult in distinguishing their own feelings of their partners. People with borderline personality incline to feel unreal and may even forget who they are.

Through the 4 characterizations of borderline personality disorder above, this study attempts to analyze Anna Karenina's traits and interpret it as symptoms of borderline personality disorder. Faithful to the explanation of the significance of psychology in this section's initial paragraph, this study interprets the finding as a part of the novel's internality rather than its connection to its author's (Tolstoy) subjectivity or historicity as well as the novel's societal morale.

METHODS

The method used here was a qualitative method. Selecting proper data to be interpreted required a closed-reading process. The data consist of main data and additional data. The main data are taken from *Anna Karenina* itself, specifically from the narrator's description of Anna as well as Anna's dialogues. The additional data are taken from reference books, essays, criticism towards the novel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the story Anna Karenina is told as a mother of an eight-year-old boy. Referring to the age of her son, Anna is approximately running an early adult life at that time. Most people of borderline personality disorder show their symptoms in early adult life or late adolescence (Ghinea et al., 2019; Vanwoerden et al., 2019). This symptom, generally speaking, poses a threat for the subjects to perform a self-harm for themselves (Bozzatello et al., 2021; Reichl & Kaess, 2021). This early fact of Anna has shown the potentiality for the story to explore such issue and treats it as the main conflict.

Anna's instability in her mood and behavior

Anna goes abroad with her lover, Vromsky, in a condition when she is not divorced yet because she refuses to divorce. By doing that, she totally expenses to the society how bad she is. She loves her lover but she still does not want to divorce with her husband. Her decision leads the society to hate her more and more. It will be easier if she agrees getting divorce with Karenin so that the society's hatred will not be so big.

After several months in overseas, Anna and Vronsky comeback and live in Petersburg again. They really can feel the unpleasant situation from the society as if they live in a strange place. The bad response from the society is due to their unforgiveable relationship. At that time, Vronsky feels something strange in relation to Anna's attitude. Her mood is changing all the time. One time, she appeared warm and full of love, in another time she appears very easy going and also easy to get angry, as stated in the following:

> The stay in Petersburg seemed to him still more trying because he noticed all the time in Anna a new and to him incomprehensible mood. At one moment she appeared to be in love with him, and at the next would turn cold, irritable, and impenetrable (pp. 526).

This situation is diagnosed as a symptom of people with borderline personality disorder. People with this disorder often experience the unstable of

mood and behavior. So, their mood and behavior are changing all the time, they seem to be lovely but in a moment later they seem very angry. It happens because of the depression, anxiety, or anger seems to arise frequently. Vronsky thinks that there is something burdensome to her. He can feel that Anna is thinking of something and trying to hide it from him. "Something tormented her and she hide it from him, appearing not to notice the insult that were poisoning his life, and which should have been still more painful to her with her acuteness of perception" (pp. 526). In fact, people will easily get depressed when they have something which burden them they cannot share it to anyone. Even they may get not only thing torments Anna that she can never tell Vronsky about it.

Other symptoms describing Anna's unstable mood and behavior happens when Anna see Serezha for the first time in his ninth birthday after her returning to Russia. "I Know" he said, opening his eyes. "To-day is my birthday. I knew you would come! I'll get up directly…" (pp. 529). Anna is really happy that she can meet him after three months. But, this happiness is not last longer, the nurse whisper her about the coming of Karenin and it directly changes Anna's expression into fear and shame. Serezha who does not know what makes his mother expression changes is not dare to ask her a question. He can only whisper her "Do not go-he is not coming yet!" (pp. 532)

Anna moves her son away from her directly and tells him how good his father. She also tells her son that the only one to be blamed about this condition is herself. "Serezha, my darling! She said, love him! He is better and kinder than I, and I am to blame toward him. When you are grown up you will be able to judge" (pp. 532). But, a few second after telling her son about it, Karenin Cmes and directly bows his head to her when they meet each other. Suddenly, the feeling of anger and jealousy toward him arise.

Despite what she had just said,- that he was better and kinder than she was – after casting at him a rapid glance which took in his whole figure to the minutest detail, she was seized by a feeling of loathing and anger toward him and jealousy for her son (pp. 533).

Thus, the rapid mood shift experienced by Anna from saying about Karenin's kindness to her son directly turns to a feeling of anger. This condition shows the readers the symptom that she cannot control. Her mood is changing even for only a few second.

Anna's fear of abandonment

Although Vronsky is still accepted by the Russian society after his return from Italy, Anna shows that she still cannot be accepted. Tolstoy skillfully builds up a final dramatic misunderstanding between Anna and Vronsky. When Vronsky goes for a brief visit to his mother in the country, Anna sends him an urgent request to return, but through mischance, it does not reach him in time. Finally, it ends with a feeling of fear and anxiety of losing Vronsk's love. It happens because of her thinking of being lonely at that time. His love and he himself are the things now possesses.

"But where is he? How can he leave me alone in my anguish? "she suddenly thought with a sense of reproach, forgetting that she herself had hidden from him all that concerned her son. She sent to ask him to come up to her at once. She awaited him, thinking with sinking heart of the words in which should tell him

everything and or the expressions of his love which would comfort her…And suddenly a strange idea crossed her mind: what if he had ceased to love her? (pp. 535).

Meanwhile Anna's thinking about her fear of losing Vronsky's love is the expression of her fear of being abandoned. Anna's suspicion toward Vronsky is overwhelmed. In the story, Vronsky is told that he behaves as usual he always does. No changes happened except he is more protective to Anna because of the society's alienation to her. But Anna, with her own perception, feels as if Vronsky does not love her anymore. "She imagined that he had ceased to love her, and she was almost in despair, which roused in her a feeling of peculiar excitement" (pp. 535). That feeling suddenly comes and torments her mind. She also recalls her memories in the last few days about Vronsky who does not come for dinner and also for having separate apartments with her when they are in Petersburg.

Going over in her minds the events of the last few days, she thought she perceived in everything a confrontation of that dreadful thought; in the fact that he had not dined at home the day before, and that he had insisted of having separate apartments while in Petersburg, and that even now he was not coming alone perhaps to avoid a tete-a-tete with her (pp. 535).

People with this disorder are nearly paranoid about abandonment and misinterpret other people's innocent actions as abandonment or rejection. Anna also misinterprets Vronsky's lateness as a rejection to her. Whereas, Vronsky's reason of coming late is only because of her has a visitor at that time.

Anna's instability in her interpersonal relationships

After meeting Vronsky in Petersburg, Anna becomes a little bit hateful toward her son with no good reason. It is told in the novel when she returns to her house after making a reconciliation for her brother. Anna at the first time shows how she worried about her soon by asking his condition to her husband when he picks her up at the railway station. "Is Serezha well? She asked" (pp. 102) . However, when she gets to her home and meets her son, it seems like there is a kind of disappointment that she ever feels before. In her imagination, the image of her son is very nice but unfortunately when she sees him in the reality, the picture of him is not as nice as it is in her imagination. "her son, like his father, produced on Anna a feeling akin to disappointment. Her fancy had picture him nicer than he was in reality. She had to come down to reality in order to enjoy him as he was" (pp. 105)

Anna's leaving to Europe with Vronsky spends approximately three months. They visit many places such as Venice, Rome, and Naples. What makes it strange is that Anna does not think about Serezha. As if she is really fine for separating with her son for a long time. "The parting from her son, whom she loved, did not trouble her at first either. The little girl, his child, was so sweet, and Anna had grown so attached to her since she was the only child left to her, that she rarely thought of her son" (pp. 461). It is sharp contrast with the situation when she goes to Petersburg many times ago. If leaving Serezha for a while makes Anna feel sad and worry about him then she must be in a great depressed when she leaves him for more than three months. It shows that her love to the little girl is bigger than her love to her son.

On the contrary, the confusion grows when in other time after her return to Russia she declares that her love to the little girl is not as much as her love to her son, Serezha. Worse than that, she even cannot call her feeling toward the little girl as love. "…but at the sight of this child, she realized still more clearly that what she felt for her cannot even be called love in comparison with her feeling for Serezha" (pp. 534).

This condition is also happened to her husband. Anna behaves in confusion whether she like her husband or not. In one time after Anna meets Vronsky in the train when she is returning to her house from Petersburg, her husband, Karenin, is outside the train getting ready to pick her up. Suddenly the unpleasant feeling comes to her when she and her husband's eyes are fixing to look each other. As if she is expecting something different from her husband, something better than that.

An unpleasant feeling weighed on her heart when she felt has fixed and weary gaze, as if she had expected to find him different. She was particularly struck by the feeling of dissatisfaction with herself which she experienced when she meets him (pp. 102).

When she has already in their house and sees how Karenin behaves, she acts liking her husband "Anna smiled. She knew he had said that in order to show that no consideration of kinship can hinder the expression of his sincere opinion. She knew that trait in her husband's character knew and like it" (pp. 109).

The feeling of love for her husband has changed to the hatred feeling which occurred many times. In one time, she acts that her husband is a very responsible man with his job. She realizes and supports her husband as an important person in the society by not feel any kind of burden with all the things he must do and spending a long time with that and only having such a few hours to gather with her. She also tends to be to protector for her husband for someone who says nonsense that her husband has no right to be loved.

Anna smiled, as one smiles at the weakness of people one loves, and slipping her hand under his arm walked with him to the study door. She knew his habit, which had become a necessity, of reading in the evening. She knew that in spite of his time being almost entirely absorbed by the duties of his post,… (pp. 109)

> "After all, he is a good man truthful, kind and remarkable in his own sphere," said Anna to herself when she had returned on her room, as if defending him for someone who accused him and declared it was impossible to love him (pp. 110).

In another time, despite her love and her support as a protector to her husband who has an important position in the Ministry and must spent a lot of his time in working, Anna says that her husband is not even a human being but an official machine that always works and works all the time like a doll. She says that with a great anger toward her lover, Vronsky, "He is not a man, not a human being. He is ….a doll! No one else knows it, but I do. Oh if I were he, I should long since have killed, have torn in pieces … He is not a man but an official machine" (pp. 355).

The suffering of the cold official machine human Karenin, of being betrayed by his wife just as much as he makes the readers sympathize with the

suffering of Anna. Tolstoy makes Karenin forgives Anna. Karenin thinks she may die of a puerperal fever after giving birth to the little girl. While Ann at that time again praises about how kind Karenin is, "I should have forgotten and he would have forgiven… but why he does not come? He is kind, he himself does not know how kind he is. Oh God! What weariness" (pp. 406). She even begs him his forgiveness and commends him as a saint. "Look at him! He is a saint" (pp. 407).

A few days after her recovery from her illness, Anna with her own utterances shows how regret she is for not die at the time when she gets fever. It slightly implies that she is better die at the time than seeing and letting Karenin to be in her life again and even forgive her mistakes "Yes, you are laming me! Oh God, why did I not die?" (pp. 419)

Anna's experiences about the changing of her feeling from love to hate includes into one of many symptoms suffered by a person with borderline personality disorder that is unstable of interpersonal relationships. They can develop intense but stormy attachments just like the attitudes of Anna towards her husband and son may suddenly shift from great admiration and love to intense anger and dislike with no certain reasons.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that Anna's instability in mood and behavior signifies symptoms of borderline personality disorder. One time, she appears to be a warm character and full of love, in another time she appears cold and irritable. Anna's thought about her fear of losing Vronsky's love is the expression of her fear of being abandoned and it makes her suspicion toward Vronsky overwhelmed. This sense of lack and insecurity which she has becomes the main stimulus of her character's internal conflict throughout the story. Thus, by considering Tolstoy's acknowledged oeuvre as a highly realist literary writer, this study's findings and discussions shed a new light on *Anna Karenina*'s significance as a historical literary work. It is acknowledged that this study only deals with the novel's narrative internality rather than its contextual piece. It is hoped then for further studies to embark in a broader sociological context of this novel by, certainly, considering the novel's representation of borderline personality disorder.

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